

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. In a telecommunication system, a method of providing to a subscriber, an audio message converted from an electronic text message, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a plurality of telephonic devices for initiating and receiving telephone calls;

providing an automated intelligent network (IN) for the automated processing of telephone calls in said telecommunication system, said IN comprising a service control point (SCP) comprising control logic and an SCP database, and said IN comprising a plurality of switches coupled to telephone devices;

via said switches, routing calls authorized by said SCP to a destination number specified by a calling party;

via said IN and said SCP, receiving an electronic mail (e-mail) message specifying a subscriber as the intended recipient of said e-mail message;

terminating a telephone call generated by said IN to a telephone number specified by said subscriber in said SCP database;

converting text in said e-mail message to an audio message; and

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transmitting during said telephone call, an outgoing message comprising said audio message.

2. The telecommunication method in Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

5 comparing header information in said e-mail message received by said SCP to e-mail handling instructions stored in said SCP database; and routing said e-mail message to the telephone number specified by the intended subscriber when said handling instructions so indicate.

3. The telecommunication method in Claim 2, wherein said handling instructions are customizable by subscribers.

4. The telecommunication method in Claim 3, wherein the transmitted e-mail message is truncated according to truncation instructions specified by subscribers.

5. The telecommunication method in Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

determining whether said subscriber also subscribes to a Caller Identification (Caller ID) service; and

transmitting to the telephone number, Caller ID information comprising and indication that a telephone call received by the subscriber contains an e-mail message.

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7. The telecommunication method in Claim 5, wherein said Caller ID information further comprises a subject matter identifier of the e-mail message.

8. The telecommunication method in Claim 5, wherein said Caller ID information further comprises a portion of the text of said e-mail message.

9. The telecommunication method in Claim 1, wherein said terminating step includes sending a distinctive ringing pattern corresponding the inclusion of an e-mail message in said telephone call.

10. The telecommunication method in Claim 3, wherein said e-mail message is not transmitted to a subscriber unless header information in the e-mail message indicates that the message is urgent.

11. The telecommunication method in Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

prompting a subscriber to enter a code corresponding to instructing said telecommunication system to store said audio message in a voice mailbox; and

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a text-to-audio converter adapted to convert text in an electronic mail
20 (e-mail) message to an audio message;

wherein said IN and SCP are adapted to receive an e-mail message specifying a subscriber as the intended recipient of said e-mail message; and

14. The telecommunication system in Claim 13, wherein said SCP is further adapted to compare header information in said e-mail message received by said SCP to e-mail handling instructions stored in said SCP database, and route said e-mail message to the telephone number specified by the intended subscriber when said handling instructions so indicate.

15. The telecommunication system in Claim 14, wherein said handling instructions are customizable by subscribers.

16. The telecommunication system in Claim 15, wherein the transmitted e-mail message is truncated according to truncation instructions specified by subscribers.

17. The telecommunication system in Claim 13, wherein said SCP is further adapted to determining whether said subscriber also subscribes to a

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22. The telecommunication system in Claim 15, wherein said SCP is adapted to withhold the transmission of said e-mail message to a subscriber unless header information in the e-mail message indicates that the message is urgent.

a voice mailbox adapted to store audio messages, including audio e-mail messages upon receiving said code.

a voice mailbox adapted to store audio messages, including audio e-mail messages upon receiving said code.

26. The telecommunication system in Claim 13, wherein said text-to-audio converter and the function of transmitting said outgoing message are subsumed by a stand-alone intelligent peripheral.

27. The telecommunication system in Claim 13, wherein said text-to-audio converter and the function of transmitting said outgoing message

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